

Message Text

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16

ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02 INR-09 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-14 USIA-12 T-03

OMB-01 IO-12 GAC-01 RSR-01 /108 W
----- 087761

R 171315 Z MAR 73

FM AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 908

INFO AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

USMISSION NATO

C O N F I D E N T I A L THEHAGUE 1267

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PGOV, NL

SUBJECT: FORMER PRIME MINISTER'S VIEWS ON CURRENT STATUS OF
FORMING NEW GOVERNMENT

REF: THE HAGUE 983 AND 1263

1. IN TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH DCM MARCH 16 FORMER PRIME
MINISTER DE JONG (KVP) SAID FORMATEUR BURGER HAD MADE GRAVE AND
UNNECESSARY MISTAKE BY TRYING TO EXCLUDE CHU FROM A NEW GOVT.
THE OTHER TWO CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES WERE RIGHT IN
REFUSING TO DITCH THEIR CHU PARTNER, AND BURGER WOULD NOT
SUCCEED IN SPLITTING THEM.

2. IN ADDITION TO THIS STUMBLING BLOCK DE JONG SAID HE DID NOT
BELIEVE THAT THREE CONFESSONAL PARTNERS SHOULD OR WOULD ACCEPT
LESS THAN 7 MINISTERIAL SEATS IN A NEW CABINET. ACCORDING TO
DE JONG, A PROPER RATIO WOULD BE 9 LEFT WING SEATS TO 7 CONFESS-
IONAL SEATS. HOWEVER, THE CONFSSIONALS MIGHT AGREE TO CREATING
AN ADDITIONAL MINISTERIAL POST FOR LABOR AND ITS ALLIES, MAKING A
10-7 RATIO IF ALL OTHER DISAGREEMENTS COULD BE RESOLVED. AMONG THE
LATTER WERE THOSE CONCERNING THE RESPECTIVE PROGRAMS OF THE TWO
GROUPS, NOTABLY AND MOST SERIOUSLY LABOR'S INSISTENCE ON CUTTING
THE CURRENT GON DEFENSE BUDGET BY 140 MILLION GUILDERS (APPROX-
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IMATELY 2.7 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL BUDGET). DE JONG AGREED THAT THE KVP HAD SHOWN A HIGH DEGREE OF SOLIDARITY DESPITE BURGER'S ATTEMPTS TO GO OVER THE HEAD OF THE PARLIAMENTARY GROUP. HE NOTED IN THIS CONNECTION THAT MINISTER VAN AGT HAD MADE HIS AGREEMENT TO SERVE IN A DEN UYL GOVT CONDITIONAL UPON RECEIVING A GREEN LIGHT FROM KVP PARLIAMENTARY LEADER ANDRIESEN.

3. THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER WAS SIGNIFICANTLY MORE CRITICAL OF BURGER'S TACTICS THAN HE HAD BEEN IN CONVERSATION WITH DCM TWO WEEKS BEFORE. DE JONG, NORMALLY A SOFT-SPOKEN MAN, CALLED BURGER "PIG HEADED" AND SAID THAT WITH DEN UYL'S AGREEMENT BURGER WAS USING "DICTATORIAL" TACTICS IN TRYING TO FORCE THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES TO ACCEPT THE LEFT WING PARTIES' PROGRAM AND ALLOCATION OF CABINET SEATS WITHOUT COMPROMISE. THIS WAS NOT IN ACCORDANCE WITH DUTCH POLITICAL TRADITION OR PRACTICE, DE JONG EMPHASIZED, AND WAS TOTALLY UNACCEPTABLE TO THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES. HE ALSO CHARGED BURGER WITH SPEAKING WITH "TWO TONGUES", DELIBERATELY MISSTATING THE VIEWS OR POSITION OF ONE GROUP IN HIS NEGOTIATIONS WITH ANOTHER GROUP. DE JONG, A RENOWNED AND COURAGEOUS WORLD WAR II SUBMARINE COMMANDER, SAID THAT IF A SKIPPER OF A SHIP SEES THAT IT IS GOING AGROUND HIS ONLY RESORT IS TO TRY TO HAVE THIS HAPPEN IN THE BEST CONDITIONS. HE WONDERED WHETHER BURGER AND DEN UYL HAD NOT ALREADY CONCLUDED THAT BURGER'S EFFORTS WERE BOUND TO FAIL AND WERE THUS TRYING TO PUT THEMSELVES IN THE BEST POSSIBLE LIGHT. THEY MUST REALIZE THAT THE CONFESSIONAL PARTIES COULD NOT SWALLOW BURGER'S "TAKE IT OR LEAVE IT" PROPOSITIONS. PERHAPS BURGER AND DEN UYL WERE SCHEMING THAT WHEN THE FINAL BREAKDOWN CAME THEY COULD MAKE IT APPEAR THAT IT WAS THE FAULT OF THE CHRISTIAN DEMOCRATIC PARTIES.

4. THE FORMER PRIME MINISTER CONCLUDED THAT HE WAS FAR MORE PESSIMISTIC ABOUT BURGER'S CHANCES THAN HE WAS TWO WEEKS AGO. DEPENDING ON THE OUTCOME OF THE MEETING OF THE LABOR PARTY COUNCIL THAT NIGHT BURGER MIGHT HANG ON FOR A FEW MORE DAYS BY TRYING MORE OF THE SAME SPLITTING TACTICS. AT THIS POINT, HOWEVER, DE JONG THOUGHT THAT BURGER WOULD HAVE TO RENOUNCE HIS MANDATE SOONER OR LATER. AS TO WHAT CAME AFTER THAT DE JONG SAID THAT IT WAS A MATTER OF PURE SPECULATION. HE DID NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY THAT THE QUEEN MIGHT THEN TURN TO A LIBERAL PARTY FORMATEUR WITH A MANDATE TO FORM A NEW GOVERNMENT BASED ON THE THREE CONFESSIONALS AND THE LIBERAL PARTY WITH WHATEVER LEFT WING

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SUPPPORT THEY COULD ATTRACT.

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